



Three True Customer-Service Tales

**September 8, 2009**

### **Tale 1**

I had to cancel a planned two-day trip to Atlanta. I went to the website of the hotel, the Intercontinental-Buckhead, and tried to cancel. I was told I had to call the hotel directly. The reservation agent told me she would be happy to cancel my room, but I would still be charged for the room (\$300), even though my canceled trip was 2 weeks away. Apparently the rate I had signed up for (that super-low \$300 rate) didn't allow for any cancellation allowance. I told her *not* to cancel the room because as long as I would have to pay for it I wouldn't want the hotel to be able to re-sell it. I also told her my Intercontinental Priority Club card, shredded, would soon be in the mail to them because I would never frequent an Intercontinental Hotel again.

### **Tale 2**

I then went to the Delta Airlines Web site to cancel my airline reservation. Unlike canceling a premium hotel reservation, I understand that airlines do not allow refunds or changes without penalty on most tickets. Since I had paid for the ticket with miles, I was charged a \$100 cancellation fee, but all the miles were returned to my account. Fair enough.

### **Tale 3**

Unrelated to the aborted Atlanta trip, my wife and I decided to return one day early from a vacation. We would, therefore, pick up our dog from the boarding kennel on a Saturday rather than a Sunday. On the way back to Madison we called the kennel, Camp K-9, and were politely informed that we would still be charged the \$25 fee for

Saturday night because they had a 4-day cancellation deadline on weekends. Again, understandable because we had taken up a night that they likely couldn't sell on such short notice.

(Note that a \$25-night dog kennel has a 4-day cancellation deadline, but a \$300 luxury hotel has a no-day cancellation grace period.)

Here's the good part. When my wife picked up the dog, she was informed that they had a last-minute customer who would take the spot and so there would be no charge for the unused night.

**Moral of the Stories**

Camp K-9: You're good guys. Delta: OK, I understand. Intercontinental Hotels: Forget any future business from me.